THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) The Government has so far invested Rs. 227.76 crores towards the polyester X-ray Film project.

(b) The plant has been commissioned on 31.3.1997.

(c) The time and cost over runs were 5½ years and Rs. 510.84 crores respectively. The factors responsible for the time and cost overrun are as follows:-

(i) Faulty initial feasibility report and non preparation of project report.

(ii) Delays in :-

(a) Award of civil contract.

(b) Construction and other works by the contractors

(iii) Availability of power from Tamil Nadu Electricity Board

(iv) Funds crunch

(v) Cost escalation

(vi) Exchange rate/Duty Variation.

(d) Government released Rs. 26.16 crore in 1996-97 to Hindustan Photo Films towards working capital for the existing plant and the polyester X-ray project.

(e) The capacity utilisation in the Polyester X-ray plant during the first quarter of 1997-98 is 3.4%. The capacity utilisation planned for 1997-98 and 1998-99 is 22%.

Market Development Assistance

1730. SHRI SANDIPAN THORAT : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) the number of appeals for Marketing Development Assistance to the Handloom Societies have been preferred to the Handloom Development Commissioner by the Handloom Societies in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu during the last three years alongwith list of societies;

(b) the number of appeals allowed by Appellate Authority;

(c) the amount involved in these appeals, with the list of societies State-wise, year-wise; and

(d) the reasons for delay in disbursing the funds under Marketing Development Assistance Scheme?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) The number of appeals preferred to the Handloom Development Commissioner by the Societies of the States of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu is "NIL".

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Pace of Reforms

1731. SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the International Monetary Fund has warned the Government about slow pace of reforms; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government to increase the pace of economic development of the country and to what extent the steps taken have improved the position?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) As part of the Aritcle IV consultation exercise, the IMF Board recognised the potential of India. They felt that the recent slow down in industrial production and exports was, to a considerable extent, a consequence of the partial nature of the reforms which had contributed to infrastructure bottlenecks and continuing constraints in the financial sector. They expressed the need for the authorities to be more vigilant and monitor closely the macro-economic developments. The IMF has not warned the Government about slow pace of reforms.

The Government is taking all measures to increase the pace of economic development.

Import of Natural Rubber

1732. SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to import natural rubber during the current financial year; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Indo-US Economic/Commercial Sub-Commission

1733. SHRI YELLAIAH NANDI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Indo-US economic/commercial sub-commission had meeting in December, 1996;

(b) if so, the details of the discussions held and the outcome thereof;

(c) whether the US has agreed to invest more and also increase trade between the two countries;

(d) if so, the extent to which US investment has been more in 1997 in comparision with 1996;

(e) the projects in which the US has made more investment; and